



## How to Help if Your Child Is Being Bullied

*The best way to help your child is to be a good listener. Talking about the problem and showing you care are comforting and helpful. Your child is likely to feel vulnerable while discussing bullying and his or her feelings about the situation. It is important to show your love and support.*

*If you find out that your child is being bullied, don't add to the burden by becoming angry. Although it's understandable to be upset, be careful not to let your child see that. Your sadness could be misinterpreted as disappointment. Be sure to validate your child's feelings; do not minimize them.*

*You should also reassure your child that he or she is not to blame. Explain that bullies are often confused or unhappy people who don't feel good about themselves.*

### What to do:

- **Ask your child directly**
- **Listen**
- **Tell the school or child-care facility immediately**
- **Resist being overprotective**
- **Teach your child the social skills he/she needs to make friends**
- **Encourage your child to seek spare-time activities**
- **Teach children ways to resolve arguments**
- **Talk about and practice assertiveness skills**
- **Seek help**

*Artwork and drawings, or puppets may prompt younger targets to talk about bullies. Older children, however, may be helped by direct questions, like asking them to talk about their "friends" and "enemies." These strategies might make it easier for your child to talk about bullies because they are not as personal. They also emphasize that other children experience bullying too.*

***Also consider asking your child thoughtful questions, such as:***

- What is it like walking to the bus stop or home from school?
- What is it like on the bus ride to and from school?
- What happens on the playground during recess, or before or after school?
- What happens in the hallways at school or during lunchtime?
- Have any bullies in the neighborhood or at school threatened anyone you know?
- Do some children you know get emails, instant messages, or text messages that are upsetting, threatening, or insulting?

The key to helping your child deal with bullying is to help him or her regain a sense of dignity and recover damaged self-esteem.

***To help ward off bullies, give your child these tips:***

- ***Hold the anger.*** It's natural to want to get really upset with a bully, but that is exactly the response the bully wants
- ***Never get physical or bully back.*** Emphasize that your child should never use physical force (like kicking, hitting, or pushing) to deal with a bully. Not only does that show anger, but your child can never be sure what the bully will do in response.
- ***Act brave, walk away and ignore the bully.*** Tell your child to look the bully in the eye and say something like, "I want you to stop right now."
- ***Use humour.*** In situations where your child has to deal with a bully and cannot walk away with poise, tell him or her to use humour or offer a compliment to throw the bully off guard.
- ***Talk about it.*** It may help your child to talk to a guidance counsellor, teacher, or friend - anyone who can give the support your child needs
- ***Use the buddy system.*** Enlisting the help of friends or a group may help both your child and their friends as they support each other and take a stand
- ***Develop more friendships.*** Join social organizations, clubs, or sports programs

Of course, you may have to intervene in persistent cases of bullying. This can involve going to school with your child and talking to your child's teacher, school counsellor, or principal. In certain extreme cases it may be necessary to contact legal authorities. Safety should be everyone's concern. If you've tried the previous methods and still feel the need to speak to the bullying child's parents, it's best to do so within the context of the school, where a school official, such as a counsellor, can mediate.

**References**

[www.canadiancrc.com](http://www.canadiancrc.com)

[www.hwdsb.on.ca](http://www.hwdsb.on.ca)